

Mr. Chairmen, Members

I urge you to reject the bill before you.

This bill purports to abolish the death penalty, prospectively only.

In fact, if enacted, Connecticut will eventually release to live out their lives in general population a man who had an 8-year old and his mother killed to eliminate the child as a witness.

You will inevitably convert a death sentence into life for another depraved monster who beat to death a thirteen year old boy with a sledgehammer to know what it felt like. You will give life to rapist murderers who poured gasoline on their victims and immolated them.

Supporters of this bill claim life without parole as their genuinely fitting substitute punishment for "the worst of the worst."

Over the past 25 years, I have spent thousands of hours in prisons, interviewing more than a hundred convicted killers, along with dozens of correctional officers.

They have taught me: LWOP cannot substitute for the death penalty.

They have taught me one simple truth: Inside prison, it's nobody's job to punish.

Difficult to believe, I know, but true.

Safety, security, protection. Nowhere does Connecticut's mission statement so much as mention *punishment*.

Last week, I visited three Connecticut prisons, including death row.

What I saw appalled me, although it did not surprise me.

Two wardens and the public information officer confirmed it: They do not know and they do not care what crime a man has committed.

Inside prison everybody starts with a clean slate.

So, today -- within a month of being sentenced to Life Without Parole, a convicted rapist-murderer of a child in Connecticut can expect to be out of his cell either working, visiting, showering, talking on the phone, or playing with others, indoors or out, 10-12 hours a day, every day for the rest of his life.

The question of justice—whether LWOP can morally substitute for the death penalty—depends not on *where* these vicious killers die, but on *how they live* before they die.

If Jennifer Hawke-Petit, 17 year old Hayley and 11 year old Michaela could somehow witness the lives of their rapist-murderers in prison, would they feel satisfied that justice was being done?

You *can* demand and legislate real punishment.

For the worst of the worst, life itself should be a punishment beyond a permanent loss of liberty. Life should be unpleasant, all day, every day.

Until or unless you embrace a true *punishment* of life, the closest Connecticut can come to real justice for the worst of the worst is the punishment of death -- but only with a more morally refined statute.

Explore the statute you would abolish. Revise, refine it. My written statement makes many concrete suggestions, but obviously revision requires reflection and collective wisdom.

Meanwhile, submit the question to a popular referendum: Listen to the voice of the people.

And in the end, if you are still determined to thwart the will of your constituents and abolish the death penalty, at least do it honestly.

On what possible principle can you justify this cruel hoax?

It demeans you, and the People you represent.